



*In the
Gardens
of God*

J. A. Edgerton

In the Gardens of God

BY

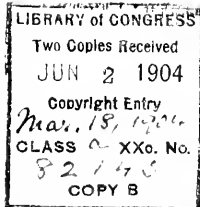
James Arthur Edgerton



THE ESSENE

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For thee, O dear, dear country !—*Bernard de Cluny*.

So he, who firmly believes that the future life is full of glory and gazes at it with a certain clearness of vision, endures everything, and despises everything in order to attain it.—*Savonarola*.

In the Gardens of God.

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I.

In the stillness of evening's hour,
As the cares of day depart,
Like the dew stealing over the flower,
A longing steals over the heart—
A longing for something we cannot define,
A something divine,
A glory we've lost, or a beauty to gain,
A dream of a height we have yet to attain,
A heaven that waits
In some bright land afar,
Through scintillant gates
That are standing ajar,
A green shore awash by a sun-molten sea,
A merging in God in some æon to be—
'Tis a vision like this,
A thirst after bliss,

That steals o'er the heart in the evening hour,
As the dew steals over the flower.

II.

What unto the weary spirit brings
This yearning for other things,
This yearning for regions unseen, unknown?
Do seraphim, fresh from the heavenly throne,
 For the love they bear,
 Assemble 'round,
With bodies too rare
 For sight or sound,
And in spirit language a tale unfold
Of beauties unpictured and joys untold,
 That the soul can never resist?
Is a subtle mist shaken from off their wings,
 As from night-wings the dewy mist,
That unto the weary spirit brings
This yearning for higher and better things?

III.

The thoughts drift away from the things of earth
And a vision divine has birth.
The power that draws them to look above
Is the magnet of love.
There are those we have lost in the years ago
And we follow them on
To a sweeter dawn—
We follow them on, till we see them stand,
 Their faces bright
 With a radiant light
That shines o'er the Spirit Land.
Our thoughts drift away from the things of earth
And a wonderment deep has birth.

IV.

Where is the Spirit Land?
Is it in some realm afar
Beyond the bounds of the farthest star?
Does Beauty dwell there
With a smile so rare

That it spreads about her a perfect day,
Of which earth gains but a glimmering ray,
Shining across some mystical strand
That leads to this wonderful Spirit Land?

V.

Some Elysian clime
In a land sublime
Out of the bounds of space and time;
Some far away realms
Where the day overwhelms
In a glorious flood the shadows of night;
Where Thought ever dwells in a rich delight;
Where the spirit floats free
On an airy sea
Of bliss born from beauty and harmony,
Whose billows of splendor lap over the soul
And over the face of Eternity roll,
In this mystical home
In the world to come,

Where enraptured, immortal spirits roam,
In this land sublime,
This Elysian clime
Out of the bounds of space and time?

VI.

"Would'st know?" a whisper says, "then come.
Over the starry fields we'll roam.
Come with me, come with me,
Past the isles of the starry sea,
Where little worlds circle and great worlds flee,
Come with me.
Past the suns that gleam afar,
Past the boundary of the star,
Over Infinity's golden bar,
Come with me.
Out of time, out of place,
Into Eternity, out of space,
Into Existence' other phase,
Come with me.

Build there your temple o'er all supreme.
Believe; and your faith fulfills your dream.
Into that state that lies in wait
Faith alone is the entering gate."
A whisper says to my spirit, "Come.
Over the starry fields we'll roam."

VII.

The earth, with its burden of life, whirls free
 In an irregular race.
The myriad orbs of Immensity,
 That sprinkle Eternity's face,
Wheel on, wheel on, through the vasty sea,
 Through the bottomless deeps of space—
Younger worlds, worlds new-born,
Entering but life's morn,
Worlds that maturer beauties adorn,
Worlds of their beauty shorn,
Worlds grown old and feeble and gray,

Ready to sink from very decay
Back to the source,
The fountain of force,
That started them forth in their circling course.
God's lands stretch ever on,
 O'er them His banners of light unfurled,
On past the splendor of sun,
 On past the wonder of world;
Now on and away
Through the halls of day,
 Through rolling seas of radiance bright,
 Through chaotic darkness as well as light,
 Through the halls of day and of night;
Where circling in clustered array,
 Wheeling in dizzy flight,
Dotting the face
Of boundless space,
Moving forever in endless race,
Roll, majestic and broad and free,
The myriad orbs of Infinity.

VIII.

Till, over a golden bar,
The boundary of the star,
Lieth a realm afar;
Riseth an isle sublime,
In an Elysian clime,
Out of space, out of time;
Over a mystical strand,
Lieth a beautiful land,
Dwelleth a heavenly band;
Reigneth Eternity's King
 Upon the Infinite shore,
With seraphs that sweetly sing
 His praises forevermore.
These starry worlds that glow
 Like far-off lights in this,
 These are the gardens of souls
 That, 'neath the splendor which rolls
 Down from the sun-like eye
 Of Divinity,

Their flowers may blow
And their fruits may grow,
 To be gathered at length in this kingdom of His,
Into the radiant land afar
Beyond the boundary of the star.

IX.

For these myriad worlds are rife
With Life—
With beings glad in the ecstasy,
The sweet and immortal mystery,
Of that new-old miracle, To Be.
“Yes,” a voice from the Silence saith,
“Glad through the life that seems death”;
For, as wind from the Northland blowing
 Under a wintry sky
Breathes on the Southland glowing
 And blights, as it passes by,
Till the rivers are stilled in their flowing
 And the roses shudder and die;

And, as winds of the South in the earliest Spring
Fly North with a breath of the Sun and bring
The beauty and gladness of new life again,
That breathe o'er the treetop and breathe o'er the plain
And breathe a life into the pattering rain,
That coax forth the grass and the blossoms, and break
The sleep of the Earth, till he starts, broad awake—
So, on all these beings, Mutation's breath
Blows, and they crumble away into death;
Blows, and they fall as the delicate forms
Too tender to bear 'gainst the wintry storms;
But a whisper says that in vanishing
 They've but gone to a realm where are playing
 Zephyrs and breezes bland,
And the softest of winds are straying
 Out of a sun-kissed land,
To arise in the sweeter awakening
Of a gladder and a more beautiful Spring.
"Yes," whispers say,
"O'er the Meadows of May,

The Gardens of God in fields Elysian,
That sometimes appear unto us in vision,
Where all things ever
 Are sweet and new,
Where Time is a river
 That's fed with dew,
And Life seems just begun,
 There souls, like roses, are growing,
 Like lilies and bluebells, are blowing,
 Like daisies, are springing,
 Like glad birds, are singing,
Warmed by a heavenly Sun.
For they all have left this Winter of strife,
 To bloom, eternal
 In realms supernal,
In the beautiful Summer of Life."

X.

Some voice in my inmost ear
 Is whispering low and sweet,

“The kingdom of heaven is here,
Even here at your very feet.
The country in which the immortals are,
While stretching away beyond sun and star,
Is not in a distant sphere;
Though as far as the poles of being are far,
’Tis as near as the soul is near.”

XI.

Over a mystical strand,
Out of space, out of time,
Lieth a beautiful land,
Lieth a kingdom sublime;
And, flooding this realm that is near and far,
Rays of Truth we but faintly see
Flash past the shores of Eternity,
Flash on our little night below,
With silver twinkle and golden glow,
Each a new and radiant star;
And voices of Truth we but faintly hear,

Sweet as the music of rolling sphere,
Fall in celestial harmony,
"Soul, thou shalt live unceasingly"—
Flowing, flowing, a beautiful chime—
 O, my spirit,
 Dost thou hear it
Echoing over a golden strand from an Elysian clime?

XII.

And mingling with this voice afar
 Comes another that whispers clear—
The effects and causes of what we are
 Flowing around an eternal sphere.
Nature says through her wonderful plan,
"Man is immortal, a god is man."
The stars speak to us and field and wood,
A spirit that dwells in the solitude,
And all that is noble and great and good,
 Together we upward strive.

Out of the silence there comes a voice,
Which says to my soul, "Rejoice, rejoice,
And know that to be
Is enough, when you see
There is nothing but immortality.

Then thanks to the One-Life give."
And out of my heart a little bird springs
And hearkens and listens and sings and sings.
The voices of Being in rapture swell
And merging, float
Into one full note,

That says, "Rest peacefully, soul, 'tis well."
The glad winds bring it,
The sweet birds sing it,
"Soul, thou wilt live, wilt live."

Softly shines a mystic star,
On my spirit 'tis breaking clear;
And past Eternity's shore afar
Beacons from heaven's inmost sphere.

XIII.

Out of the creeds and systems of men
Two thoughts have ever risen supreme—
The eternal God of the Universe
And the ever-developing God-in-Man;
And whenever these thoughts were shattered, again
Sprang they to life, a perennial dream—
Sprang as the flowers into gentle birth,
Which the sun and the wind and the rain storms nurse,
Sprang as the forms from the warm-hearted earth,
Sprang, 'neath the vivifying beam,
That struggles from out the beautiful plan—
Running through better and running through worse
To the boundless walls of the Universe—
Giving life to the germ in the heart of man.

XIV.

Our souls are developing upward out of the night,
Forever upward, upward, into the light;
And creeds grow old and systems wane,

But these germinal truths forever remain—
The ever-living God on high
And the struggling God in Humanity.
In the mass of men they sleep, but a word,
A touch, or a love will bring them to life;
And the spirit once by their passion stirred
Is evermore with their glory rife.
And thus through the years, like a golden gleam,
Shines unto mankind the Immortal Dream,
To grow more bright, forever more bright,
As the souls of men struggle out of the night,
To see Truth's radiant, growing light.

XV.

There is an Eternity beyond,
Soul of Man;
For this is the dream divine that has dawned,
A part of the Cosmical Plan,
That unfolds at last on our little ken.
It grows from the natures and hearts of men.

It grows from the seed there sown of God.
Man spurns beneath his feet the clod
And feels as if allied by birth
To something beyond his bonds of earth.
He hears a voice that comes from far,
And sometimes o'er the fleshly bar
That separates the things that are
 From those that seem,
He sees the shining of a star,
 To light his dream.
He looks upon a brighter fate,
A fairer state that lies in wait
Somewhere beyond the Future's gate.
And there are times when his soul ascends
 To a clearer air on the mental heights,
And when, though dimly, he apprehends
 There is a spirit that all unites ;
That under all being there is a soul ;
That life is a garment seamless and whole ;
 That all things are immortal ;

That spirits throughout all Existence range,
Through lives that are new and forms that are strange;
 That earth is a room and birth is a portal
In the Infinite Mansions of Change.
For this is the dream divine that has dawned :
 Man, as a part
 Of the unified Whole,
 A throb in the heart
 Of the Cosmical Soul,
In the All-Life, shall life beyond.

XVI.

The plant would not grow,
 Were it not for the flower ;
And the flower would not blow,
 Were it not for the fruit.
'Twas the Spirit of Worlds that made them so.
 He covers their stronger framework of power
With a rounding and softening loveliness,
 The beauty of perfect symmetry,

That they, in this gentler mode, may express
The nature of Love in Divinity,
The touches that all His creation grace;
And so from the visible worlds, apace,
Life grows as the leaf and bursts forth as the flower
From matter, which is but the stock and the root,
While Eternity gathers the fruit.

XVII.

What does the spirit say
Of the specter that we call Death?
" 'Tis only the stealing away
Of a heavenly breath.
And the ashen hue upon the cheeks and lips
Is not from the Sun of Life's eclipse,
But rather falls from the dawning gray
Of a better, a sweeter, a gladder day;
Nor is death the orge, repulsive, cold
That we have been told,
But an angel of God that comes to us,

Whose face with compassion is luminous,
A lover bold,
 With kisses warm,
 Who woos the soul in her starry form
From the dream of Sense,
 In which she was held;
And he bears her hence,
 Her sleep dispelled,
Till, broad awake,
 She, with sweet surprise,
Sees the new dawn-break,
 With immortal eyes.”
It is thus that the Spirit saith
Of the specter that we call Death:
“Death is the angel that opes the portal
 Unto a higher way.
Life is eternal; man is immortal,
 Rising victorious,
 Radiant, glorious,
 Out of the clay;

Out of the bounds of time,
Into the realms sublime,
Into a golden clime,
 Into the day."

XVIII.

Would you walk in the Gardens of God,
 Where each soul is a flower that blows;
Where each thought is an opening bud,
 And each heart is a rose;
Where each blossom is turned to the light
 Of the Sun, ever hanging at morn;
And a dew-drop that love renders bright
 In each bosom is worn;
Where the language is thought that out-leaps,
 Unspoken, from soul unto soul;
Where the music swells up from the deeps,
 Like a sweet organ roll,
That is set to a Cosmical key,
 And is universal in chord,

All worlds choiring harmony
Of praise to the Lord?
There time is not counted by measure,
But only by states of delight.
There Truth seems as Beauty; and Pleasure
Is wedded with Right.
There to sow is to garner; to earn
Is to have; to aspire is to be;
To attain is the fruit of to yearn;
And to dream is to see.
There action is one with repose.
There the ages with eider are shod.
There Love is the sunlight that glows,
In the Gardens of God.

XIX.

Over a mystical strand,
Out of space, out of time,
Lieth a beautiful land,
Lieth a kingdom sublime.

Reigneth Eternity's King,
 Upon the Infinite Shore,
With seraphs that sweetly sing
 His glories forevermore.
And the worlds that sprinkle the night,
In glittering clusters of light,
That glow like beacons bright,
 In this,
 These are the gardens of souls
 That lead to this kingdom of His.
These are the Fortunate Isles
 Placed over the Infinite Sea,
That, 'neath the sun-like smiles
 Of Divinity,
 That, 'neath the splendor which rolls
 From the Throne,
Their flowers may blow
And their fruits may grow,
 That the King of the harvest may claim His own.

This is the mystical source,
This is the fountain of force,
The spring of the Universe.
This is the land sublime,

Where dwells the seraph band,
This is the Elysian clime,
The Spirit Land.

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